

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRASILIA 8329

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BR

SUBJECT: ARENA CONVENTION PRODUCES NO SURPRISES

SUMMARY: ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT GEISEL CLIMAXED NATIONAL CONVENTION OF GOVERNMENT-BACKED ARENA ON SEPTEMBER 21. PRESIDENT APPEALED FOR UNITY AND ACTION, FORSAW CONTINUED ARENA ELECTORAL VICTORIES, AND REAFFIRMED PARTY'S IDENTIFICATION WITH GOVERNMENT AND AIMS OF THE REVOLUTION. CONVENTION RATIFIED GOVERNMENT'S CHOICE OF FRANCELINO PEREIRA AS NEW PARTY PRESIDENT AND APPROVED EXTENSIVE AND LIBERAL PARTY PROGRAM. ARENA EMERGED FROM CONVENTION WITH MORE ENHANCED, IMPROVED SENSE OF POLITICAL DIRECTION, GREATER CONCERN FOR ITS APPEAL TO YOUTH, AND WITH SOME OF ITS DOUBTS DISPELLED ABOUT FIRMNESS OF GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO IT. END SUMMARY.

1. NATIONAL CONVENTION OF ARENA SEPTEMBER 20-21, WHICH WAS HIGHLIGHTED BY SPEECH BY PRESIDENT GEISEL, PRODUCED FEW SURPRISES. NEARLY 600 DELEGATES IN ATTENDANCE GAVE NEAR UNANIMOUS RATIFICATION TO GOVERNMENT'S CHOICE OF FEDERAL DEPUTY FRANCELINO PEREIRA AS NEW ARENA PRESIDENT, SUCCEEDING PETRONIO PORTELLA (BRASILIA 7178). ELECTED ALONG WITH PEREIRA TO KEY PARTY EXECUTIVE POSTS-- AND ALSO WITHOUT OPPOSITION-- WERE: SENATOR JARBAS PASSARINHO, FORMER MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND LABOR, AS FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT; BANK OF BRAZIL EXECUTIVE WALTER PARACCHI BARCELOS, FORMER STATE GOVERNOR AND MINISTER OF LABOR, CONFIDENTIAL

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AS SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT: SENATOR VIRGILIO TAVORA, NOW ARENA

SENATE WHIP, AS THIRD VICE-PRESIDENT; AND NELSON MARCHESAN, 37-YEAR OLD DEPUTY FROM PARANA AND RELATIVE NEWCOMER TO ARENA LEADERSHIP RANKS, AS SECRETARY-GENERAL.

2. CONVENTION ALSO GAVE APPROVAL TO CREATION OF NEW PARTY DEPARTMENTS FOR YOUTH AND WOMEN'S AFFAIRS. ARENA'S YOUTH ARM WILL BE FORMALLY INSTITUTED AT NATIONAL YOUTH CONVENTION OCTOBER 31. AFTER SOME DEBATE AND MINOR RETOUCHING, DELEGATES APPROVED LENGTHY PARTY PROGRAM COVERING FOLLOWING FIELDS: (A) REALIZATION OF DEMOCRACY, (B) INSTITUTIONAL MODERNIZATION, (C) SOCIAL CHANGE, (D) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, (E) SOCIAL SOVEREIGNTY, AND (F) NATIONAL INTERGRATION. PROGRAM CONTAINED SUCH LIBERAL PLANKS AS AFFIRMATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, RETURN TO RULE OF LAW, RIGHT TO STRIKE, AGRARIAN REFORM, UNIVERSAL FREE SCHOOLING TO AGE 14, AND UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CHAPTER SUPPORTED FOREIGN INVESTMENT, "SUBJECT ALWAYS TO INTERESTS OF SOVEREIGNTY AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AS COMPLEMENTARY SOURCE OF SAVINGS AS WELL AS ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES AND METHODS".

3. IN THE FIRST MAJOR SPEECH AFTER FORMALLY ASSUMING PARTY PRESIDENCY, PEREIRA SAW ARENA'S ROLE AS LEADING DEBATE ON NATINAL PROBLEMS. HAILING ARENA'S PARTY PROGRAM, HE SAW ARENA'S ROLE AS SIMULATING THAT OF "VEHICLE FOR POPULAR ASPIRATIONS" AND LOYAL INSTRUMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT. HE ACCALIMED THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE REVOLUTION. AS MAJORITY PARTY, HE ADDED, ARENA'S TASK IS TO ORIENT THE FORMULATION OF GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS, AND HE SAW ARENA'S NEW RESEARCH INSTRUMENT, THE RECENTLY INAUGURATED MILTON CAMPOS INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STUDIES, AS HAVING A KEY ROLE IN THE TASK OF DEVELOPING SOLUTIONS TO NATIONAL PROBLEMS. HE CALLED ON ARENA TO EXAMINE ITS RESPONSIBILITY AND TO PARTICIPATE AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT, AND HE ASSUED THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PARTY'S LOYALTY AND COLLABORATION.

4. PRESIDENT GEISEL'S SPEECH AT CLOSING SESSION (REPORTED IN DETAIL IN SEPTEL) REAFFIRMED ARENA'S IDENTITY WITH GOVERNMENT AND ITS REVOLUTIONARY PROGRAM, TOOK NOTE OF ARENA'S VOTING STRENGTH AND ELECTORAL ADVANTAGES, AND FORESAW ELECTION VICTORIES FOR THE PARTY IN 1976 AND 1978. PRESIDENT APPEALED FOR PARTY UNITY AND HARD WORK TO REFUTE THE CRITICS AND

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DOOMSAYERS WHO SEE ARENA AS FACING AN INTERNAL CRISIS OR DESTINED FOR DEFEATS IN FUTUE ELECTIONS.
COMMENT: AT LEAST ON SURFACE ARENA CONVENTION WAS MODEL OF SERENITY, PRECISION AND INTERNAL UNITY, IN CONTRAST TO INTER-NECINE SQUABBLING THAT MARKED CONVENTION OF RIVAL MDB, WHICH WAS TAKING PLACE SIMULTANEOUSLY IN NEARBY SENATE CHAMBER. CONSIDERING GENERAL POLICY DRIFT AND LETHARGY DISPLAYED BY ARENA IN RECENT MONTHS, PARTY APPEARS TO HAVE EMERGED FROM THE CONVENTION WITH

BETTER MORALE AND IMPROVED SENSE OF DIRECTION. PRESIDENT'S
SPEECH HELPED DISPEL DOUBTS ABOUT GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO
ARENA AND SUPPORT PARTY CAN EXPECT IN 1976 AND 1978 ELECTIONS.
AT LEAST FOR TIME BEING CONVENTION OUTCOME CUT GROUND FROM
UNDER THESIS OF SMALL BUT INFLUENTIAL NUMBER OF PARTY ACTIVISTS
THAT ARENA'S SALVATION LIES NOT IN CLOSER TIES WITH GOVERNMENT
BUT IN DEVELOPMENT OF SEPARATE IDENTITY. MEASURES TO OPEN UP
ADDITIONAL PARTY CHANNELS TO WOMEN AND YOUTH WAS RESPONSIVE
TO RECENT GROWTH OF CONCERN AMONG PARTY ACTIVISTS THAT ARENA'S
INDIFFERENCE WAS ALLOWING THE OPPOSITION TO MONOPOLIZE SUCH
MINORITIES. NEW LEADERSHIP GIVES USUALLY STAGNANT ARENA SLIGHTLY
MORE YOUTHFUL IMAGE. CHOICE OF 37-YEAR OLD MARCHESAN AS
SECRETARY GENERAL GIVES PARTY A NEW FACE, WITH LINKS TO YOUTH
AND LIBERAL SECTORS, IN KEY POST. WHILE NOT EXACTLY YOUTHFUL,
52-YEAR OLD PARTY PRESIDENT PEREIRA, BRINGS AT LEAST A FRESH
FACE, NEW OUTLOOK, AND PROVEN VOTE-GETTING ABILITY TO TOP PARTY
POST.
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